

PRESS RELEASE: Immediate
FROM: Florida Humanities Council

Historian Michael Gannon Wins First Florida Lifetime Literary Achievement Award

Michael Gannon, a renowned scholar and writer known as the dean of Florida historians for work spanning more than four decades, has won the inaugural Florida Lifetime Literary Achievement Award.

Gannon, 82, will receive the award March 23 at the Governor's Mansion in Tallahassee.

A versatile intellectual who began as a sports reporter in St. Augustine, Gannon has authored and edited numerous acclaimed histories. The Gainesville resident, who is Distinguished Service Professor of History Emeritus at the University of Florida, has written a play and a historical novel. He also was a war correspondent in Vietnam and is a former Catholic priest.

"We are delighted to congratulate Mike Gannon, and we are impressed that he was the judges' unanimous choice for this prestigious award," said Janine Farver, executive director of the Florida Humanities Council. The council oversees the nomination process, convenes a panel of judges, and recommends a winner to the Governor.

Gary Mormino, a member of the judging panel, called Gannon "a towering figure in his long career at the University of Florida."

Spain's colonial history in Florida has long been one of Gannon's primary historical interests. Two of his books, *Rebel Bishop* (1964) and *The Cross in the Sand*, (1965) treat the Catholic Church's early history in Florida. He is co-author of two other books and a contributor to numerous others about the region, including *Spanish Influence in the Caribbean, Florida and Louisiana, 1500-1800*, published in Madrid, Spain, and *The Hispanic Experience in North America*, published by the Ohio State University.

In the area of naval and military history, HarperCollins in New York published

Gannon's 1990 book, *Operation Drumbeat*, a history of Germany's first U-boat operations along the American coast during World War II. The book became a national best seller and the subject of a National Geographic Explorer program, which won an Emmy as the Best Historical Program of 1992. Foreign language editions were published in Germany and Japan. His book *Black May* (HarperCollins) about the defeat of the U-boats in May 1943, was an alternate selection of the Book-of-the-Month Club and was published in Germany and China.

Gannon's *Florida: A Short History* was published in 1993 by the University Press of Florida, and a revised and updated edition was published in 2003. In 1994 HarperCollins published his *Secret Missions*, a Florida-based historical novel set in World War II, which was chosen by Readers Digest Condensed Books. In 1996 he edited and contributed to *The New History of Florida*, the first comprehensive history of the state in a quarter of a century. His two-act play, *Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings on Trial*, premiered at the Theater Center in DeLand in July 1997. A revival of the play, under its original title *My Friend Zelma*, will be produced in April at the Limelight Theater in St. Augustine.

In 2001 Henry Holt and Company published his latest book, *Pearl Harbor Betrayed*, called "the most authoritatively researched and documented book yet written" on the Japanese attack of December 7, 1941.

In June 1990, Spanish King Juan Carlos I. conferred on Gannon that nation's highest academic award, Knight Commander of the Order of Isabel la Catolica. In 2000, Gannon was named by the *Gainesville Sun* as one of the 50 most notable citizens of north Central Florida during the 20th century.

Kathleen Deagan, Distinguished Research Curator of Archaeology at the Florida Museum of Natural History, has known Gannon since she took a history class from him as a college freshman in 1966.

"He really embodies Florida history," Deagan says. "He is the guy who does Florida history throughout the state. He has taught so many people who have gone on to lead Florida in so many areas: politics, academics, law, business."

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